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CHILE AND HER CIVIL WAR.

BY CAPTAIN JOSÉ M^A. SANTA CRUZ, LATE COMMANDER OF THE
“HUASCAR.”

CHILE had for more than half a century enjoyed peace and tranquillity within her borders, and her citizens, realizing that the uninterrupted progress and prosperity of their country were owing to this fact, were determined to maintain peace at any cost. They had before their eyes the example of their less fortunate sister republics in South America, whose slow development has been due to the instability caused by their frequent revolutions.

Mr. Balmaceda, who knew the Chilian citizens' inborn abhorrence of revolution, took advantage of it to abuse the powers conferred on him, and attacked the most cherished rights of the people, such as their right of public meeting, the liberty of the press, and their electoral right.

All our administrations under the rule of honest Presidents had been so free from corruption that we believed implicitly in the honesty and good faith of our magistrates ; and it was not till we became convinced that Mr. Balmaceda was determined to name his own successor, in case he could not, even against constitutional provisions, perpetuate himself in office, that we came to suspect that his determination was prompted by his anxiety to screen himself from the exposure which would result in case his successor was freely elected by the people.

This insistence on the part of the President that he should name his successor was what led the different parties to unite against the President in order to insure to the people the free choice of their candidates.

The officers of the Chilian Navy, while they have always taken a deep interest in the welfare of their country, have always kept aloof from the ardent political conflicts. But there are

times when it is impossible for a citizen who loves his country to remain passive and indifferent, and the officers of the navy, whose principal duty it is to defend their country from the attack of foreign foes, felt on the 1st of January last that as the citizens of a republic they must defend her from the attack of her enemies from within. The constitution had been violated and trampled upon; it was their duty to uphold and defend it.

Our constitution provides that the strength of the naval and land forces must be fixed annually by Congress, and without such a law they can have no legal existence.

The President had deliberately closed Congress when it was assembled with the object of passing this law, and refused to summon it again for this purpose; and inasmuch as the law expired on the 31st of December, after this date neither the army nor navy could exist legally.

After the 1st of January those offending against military discipline were tried in accordance with the regulations, but the attorney general of the army gave a decision in which he declared that, inasmuch as the annual law had not been passed by Congress, these men could not be held by a military court.

The President endeavored to obtain from all the officers of the army their written pledges of unconditional support, and all who refused to give such pledges were imprisoned by order of Mr. Balmaceda. These officers then appealed to the Supreme Court, and the government did everything in its power to influence the court to deny its protection to these officers; but the purity of our judges was proof against such influence, and the court decided that the officers should be set at liberty, as they had committed no military offence, and at the same time sustained the attorney general by deciding that the army and navy had no legal existence.

The President, however, refused to obey the mandates of our Supreme Court, and closed it.

In the meantime the President issued a proclamation to the country, in which he declared that he would continue to spend the public moneys as he pleased, and would maintain the army and navy without the authorization of Congress. This was a direct violation of the constitution, and Congress, considering that this was one of the cases provided for in that instrument giving to it a right to declare the President incapable of holding

office, formally deposed him, and empowered Captain Montt, of the navy, to assume the command in order to reëstablish constitutional order in the country.

A similar request was made to the army, but, unfortunately, Mr. Balmaceda had for a long time past been making his preparations for a *coup d'état*, and had imprisoned the leading officers who had not submitted to his dictation, and who would not lend their services to promote the ruin of their country.

The officers of the navy did not for a moment vacillate in obeying the orders of Congress. All they asked was that the presiding officers of the Senate and House of Deputies should establish themselves on board in order that they might act in conjunction with their commander in all that was necessary to secure the triumph of such a sacred cause.

In compliance with so just a petition, Señor Waldo Silva, vice-president of the Senate, and Señor Barros Luco, president of the Chamber of Deputies, came on board the fleet, and established a provisional junta, together with Captain Montt.

It was confidently believed that the army would join the navy in its patriotic efforts; and had this been the case, the President would have been forced to summon Congress to pass the necessary laws in order that the government might be conducted in a constitutional manner. Nothing, however, was further from the President's mind than the assembling of Congress: on the contrary he had determined to banish the most prominent leaders to Pascua Island, a Chilian possession 3,000 miles distant on the Pacific Ocean; and he had, with this in view, ordered the corvette "O'Higgins" to be fully provisioned and to hold herself in readiness to sail at a moment's notice, carrying away the leaders of Congress. This fact in itself produced the greatest indignation against the President, for the inviolability of Congressmen had ever been respected.

On the 7th of January the President published a manifesto in which he declared, without any attempt at concealment, that he would henceforth be a dictator, assuming all public power. He had little need to make such declaration, for he had practically been such from the 1st of January, when he had declared his determination to disburse the public funds according to his will.

Henceforth there was no respect for law and order; the

people's most sacred rights were everywhere violated ; Senators and Representatives were thrown into prison, and those supposed to sympathize with the cause of Congress were subjected to the cruelest torture. The newspapers were closed ; the right of meeting was not allowed to the citizens ; the courts, the only guarantees of justice, were set aside, and martial law was proclaimed throughout the land.

It is not easy to imagine the indignation which these outrages produced in a country whose citizens had so long enjoyed the fullest liberty. Even those that had been to some extent indifferent were now aroused to the full significance of the calamity which had befallen their country through the vanity and criminality of a man whose head had been turned by the flattery of his partisans and by his evident desire to maintain his power.

The fleet which supported Congress was composed of the following vessels : the two ironclads "Blanco Encalada" and "Almirante Cochrane," the monitor "Huascar," the cruiser "Esmeralda," the corvette "O'Higgins," and the gunboat "Magallanes." The corvette "Abtao," at that time on a voyage of instruction for midshipmen, joined the fleet as soon as she arrived in Chili.

On the night of the 6th the "Blanco," "Esmeralda," and "O'Higgins" left the harbor of Valparaiso and went to Quinteros, twenty miles to the north, to join the "Cochrane" and "Magallanes," and there the fleet's support of Congress was ratified by all the crews.

The "Huascar" was left in Valparaiso because she was not seaworthy and was undergoing extensive repairs. On the following day an attempt was made by Balmaceda to restore her armament and to put her in a seagoing condition, in order, if possible, to make some resistance to the fleet.

Captain Montt saw that possession of her by the dictator might be a source of embarrassment to the fleet, and he therefore entered the bay, and, having manned a sufficient number of boats, she was taken and towed out, and, having been repaired, proved a most useful addition to the fleet, taking the port of Taltal and there obtaining funds as well as a good supply of arms and ammunition, which enabled the patriotic citizens of that place to form a battalion that was destined to lend the most efficient services in subsequent engagements.

There is probably no ironclad in existence which can boast such a glorious history as the "Huascar." She was originally constructed for the government of Peru. During an uprising in that country in May, 1877, she was taken by the insurgents, and, as the government was unable to capture her, it issued a decree calling her crew "rebels" and authorizing her capture. The "Huascar" seized some lighters of coal belonging to English citizens, and the British admiral, being advised of this, sent two English men-of-war, the "Shah" and the "Amethyst," to seize her. An engagement took place which was without result. During the engagement the "Shah" fired several Whitehead torpedoes against the "Huascar," which did not take effect, thus showing the difficulty of successfully using that instrument of war against a vessel in motion on the high seas. The "Huascar" successfully eluded her pursuers, and subsequently surrendered to the authorities.

In our late war with Peru and Bolivia she rendered efficient service, and was able to annoy our fleet, for, owing to her superior speed, she escaped capture at the hands of our slower ironclads.

Finally, at Angamos, she was entrapped and captured after a stubborn fight, in which she received forty-five eight-inch shells in her hull. This may be regarded as the first naval encounter between ironclads, and was useful for the lessons that could be derived therefrom, which were not without their application to future naval constructions. In the first place it showed that, although the upper compartments of the ship were entirely destroyed, she was able, after slight repairs had been effected, to make a voyage of 600 miles; it likewise demonstrated that the plan of a revolving turret such as she had was ineffective in rough seas. After undergoing repairs, she proved her usefulness to us in the future bombardments of the war.

Returning to our narrative of the civil war, we have to refer to the utterly unprepared condition of those favoring Congress. So unpremeditated a step found us without the elements of war, and the navy, though well equipped for a naval campaign, could not furnish our men with the elements of a campaign on land.

But nothing could daunt the courage of those who were fighting for the cause of freedom; they made the most of everything, and were able to undertake those movements on land which resulted so successfully and are a title of honor to our brave soldiers and sailors.

The movement was so unexpected that many of the officers who were on shore duty were in ignorance of it. The dictator did all in his power to prevent their joining the fleet, but most of them succeeded in escaping and joined the vessels.

The dictator, in order to prevent the army from joining the movement against him, trebled their salaries and appealed to them as against the navy, endeavoring to create a feeling of rivalry, such as has existed in many countries, by telling our soldiers that the men of the navy considered themselves superior to them.

The dictator had replaced the officers in command of the different regiments by those pledged to his support ; and our soldiers, although naturally brave, are unfortunately ignorant and docile and can be easily led.

A large number of the leading officers of the army, who had until then escaped imprisonment, managed to join the fleet, and to-day are leading our army.

From the first our expeditions by sea were fortunate, and we were able to obtain an abundant supply of provisions ; and everywhere men begged to be taken on board in order to fight in our cause. We were obliged to refuse many, because we had no arms to supply them with.

The want of muskets was the most serious difficulty we had to contend against, for, even counting some obtained in our expedition against Quinteros, we could muster only 400, including those on board the men-of-war. With this number we began our campaigns, and to-day we possess an army of more than 12,000 well-equipped men.

The transport " Amazonas " and the " O'Higgins " were sent to Coquimbo, the province where Balmaceda claimed unanimous support ; they landed sixty men and took possession of the whole province, thus enabling us to obtain an abundant supply of provisions and to form in two days the first constitutional regiment with the arms there found. Providence and the dictator were thus supplying our arms.

The " Cachapoal," one of our transports, went north and took possession of most of the ports on her way up. Everywhere our men were enthusiastically received, and the small garrisons stationed at those ports gladly changed their allegiance, and joined the ranks of those who were defending constitutional liberty in order to fight against the dictator and his tyranny.

The first serious encounter between our troops and those of the dictator took place on February 7 at Pisagua, where we gained a signal victory and took 150 soldiers, who that very day joined our ranks.

The next and most important event was the taking of Iquique, where our troops found about 2,000,000 rounds of ammunition which the troops of the dictator left behind in the hurry of their flight. This enabled us to fight the battle of Pozo Almonte, where our troops, although inferior in numbers, were able to obtain a magnificent victory, completely routing their opponents, thus leaving us in unmolested possession of the richest province in Chile.

We now organized our army and sent an expedition of 1,500 to take the province of Antofagasta, which was defended by 2,500 soldiers of the dictator, who took flight on the approach of our troops because the officers did not have faith in the men under their command; two companies deserted from the dictator's troops in order to fight on our side against the despotism which they abhorred.

Our next move was against Tacna, and there again at our approach the dictator's troops fled into Peruvian territory, where they gave up their arms. The troops that fled from Antofagasta escaped into the Argentine territory, having to cross the Andes twice in order to get back to the territory occupied by the dictator.

Being now in tranquil possession of three provinces, our government was formally organized on the 12th of April last at Iquique, in order that all our territory should be under one administration.

Soon after this we directed an expedition against the province of Atacama, where the troops of the dictator, following the examples of their companions in arms at Tacna and Antofagasta, made no resistance and fled to foreign territory.

It can be easily seen from the above that the Chilean soldiers under Balmaceda, brave as our soldiers are, appear to have made up their minds not to seriously oppose the advance of their brother soldiers that fight for liberty.

Being in undisputed possession of four provinces which it is impossible for Balmaceda to recapture, with a regularly-organized government, abundant revenues, and the enthusiasm of a people who are fighting in a good cause, Bolivia recognized our belliger-

ency, and we confidently believe that other governments will accord us "like recognition." To the people of the great country of freedom whose ancestors fought so bravely in defence of their threatened liberties, and who have ever given their generous sympathy to those who were struggling against tyranny and oppression, we confidently appeal, in the certainty that they will be no less generous in their sympathy for those of our countrymen who are to-day shedding their blood for the cause of freedom and good government.

AUGUST 9, 1891.

As some days will elapse before the publication of the above review of the situation in Chile prior to the fall of Balmaceda, I am indebted to the courtesy of the editor of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW for being able to add a few words respecting the closing scenes of the struggle in Chile for the supremacy of right over might.

The apparent lull which succeeded the capture of the province of Atacama was owing to the necessity of organizing our army in Iquique ; but unfortunately we had neither arms nor ammunition available.

The detention of the "Itata" in a port of the United States delayed our operations for nearly two months. In the meantime, however, our soldiers were being drilled with Manlicher rifles, of which we had a great number, but for which we had no ammunition.

On the 3d of July the transport "Maipu" arrived at Iquique with several thousand rifles, twenty-two cannon, four Krupp field batteries, and an immense amount of ammunition, not only for the arms she brought, but for the Manlicher rifles already in our possession. Iquique was wild with joy, and our approaching triumph was no longer problematical.

While the enthusiasm in Tarapaca was unbounded, and while our ranks might have been filled from that province alone, the Congress, always mindful of the requirements of the industries of the surrounding country, was constrained to refuse innumerable offers of service in our army. The province of Aconcagua, meanwhile, claimed the honor of furnishing two regiments, and asked only for arms. And it was owing to this that our first landing of troops was at Caldera, where a thorough organization of our

army could be made, and where we would be nearer the centre of operations and our objective point, Valparaiso. Furthermore, our being in Caldera obliged Balmaceda to reënforce his contingent in Coquimbo, thus weakening his own force in and around Valparaiso and Santiago.

Our preparations completed, our army embarked on the several vessels of war and transports, and made a successful landing at Quinteros, a small inlet twenty miles north of Valparaiso. It is impossible not to wonder at the courage—not to call it temerity—of an army of 8,000 men disembarking in that little port and ready and anxious to give battle to Balmaceda's 18,000 troops, apparently secure in their own intrenchments and officered by generals of well-tried experience.

The crossing of the river Aconcagua, under shelter of the guns of our vessels of war, made it evident to Balmaceda and his generals that we were in earnest, and they fell back on Valparaiso, near which city the bulk of their army was encamped.

During the following days there was much skirmishing, each side endeavoring to secure a vantage-ground, and then came the final battle, which is now part of history, and which gave us complete possession of Valparaiso, and twenty-four hours later of Santiago.

It was only when defeated that Balmaceda could reconcile himself to the fact that his much-vaunted popularity was a myth. Abandoned by his demoralized and mercenary soldiers, he and his late accomplices in the dictatorship succeeded in escaping from an outraged populace, and until now no one knows the whereabouts of the ex-President of Chile. Far from the scene of his early and honorable triumphs, in exile and in some foreign land, and tortured by remorse, he may pass the remnant of his life; and added to that remorse will be the crushing of his inordinate vanity and the never-dying remembrance of how he fell, like Lucifer, from his high pinnacle of power in a sovereign state to the lowest depths of ignominy.

SEPTEMBER 2, 1891.

JOSE M^A. SANTA CRUZ.